

How to Open a Worm Hotel

Materials needed...

- A WORM HOTEL- build your own or purchase a worm bin at garden store or on-line
- BEDDING - coconut coir, torn cardboard, torn newspaper, straw, peat moss, etc. Keep it simple!
- DIRT - helps worms grind food bits during digestion
- WORMS - purchase a bag from local garden store or on-line
- FOOD SCRAPS - see list below

Location! Location! Find a spot...

- Locate a shady spot outside, in a shed, or garage (yes, worm bins can be indoors! If well-balanced, they don't smell or attract flies!)
- Not too hot, not too cold - move hotel to a better spot if it becomes too cold or too hot

Build your Hotel...

- SET UP HOTEL according to instructions (purchase or see Resources "How to Build a Worm Hotel")
- BEDDING: Lay flat piece of cardboard on bottom of bin, poke lots of holes in cardboard
 - Layer about 3-4 inches of damp bedding material (coconut coir, torn cardboard / newspaper, can use peat moss, straw - think natural "brown" material, no chemicals)
 - Bedding should be damp, not wet - should feel like a squeezed-out sponge, and loose enough to allow air flow
 - Add 2-3 handfuls of dirt from your garden - Worms eat dirt with food scraps. Dirt helps grind food bits as they pass through the gizzard and digestive tract.
- ADD WORMS: Pour bag of worms on top of bedding
- ADD FOOD SCRAPS: Worms eat everything! For the healthiest worm bin, see guidelines.
- LASAGNA LAYERS: After adding food scraps ("green" nitrogen rich elements), add an equal amount of damp "brown" carbon-based material (like cardboard) - Maintains pH and structural balance in the castings/compost. Recycle newspaper & cardboard boxes this way - remove tape and labels if possible.

YES! ON THE MENU...

Plant-based food scraps
Fruit & vegetable peels, stems, cores, tops, pits
Droopy centerpiece flowers
Rice & grains, bread

WHOA! GO SLOW...

Citrus peels (not too many)
Grass clippings (too much can heat up bin)
Manure can be aged (old and dried out)

NO! OFF THE MENU...

Avoid spicy (onions, garlic), acidic (citrus), and fatty foods (dairy, cheese, oils)

Meat & bones (bad bacteria, attract pests)

Ash (too acidic and can suffocate worms)

Dog or Cat poop

Fresh horse, chicken, rabbit manure, grass clippings

Hotel Management Tips...

- **THERE'S NO EXACT SCIENCE, SO HAVE FUN** with learning how your worm hotel works!
- **START SLOW WHEN FEEDING:** worms take about a month to get established. Adult worms breed every 7-10 days. Depending on conditions, worms can double in population about every 1-3 months, so keep an eye out if you are overfeeding or underfeeding. In one year 1000 worms can become 16,000!
- **CHECK ON YOUR WORMS:** are conditions damp and dark? Is the bin draining? Are there adequate holes for air flow? Well-managed worm bins are odorless and do not have flies. If there are flies or odor, it could be a sign of poor drainage or overfeeding. A felted mat under the lid can help, and slow down feeding. Worm bins can be indoors if managed well.
- **EXPERIMENT AND OBSERVE!**
 - What foods do the worms love?
 - How many pounds of food per week are the worms consuming?
 - What other composting critters have found their way into the hotel?
 - Notice worms of all ages: egg capsules, baby worms look like white threads, adolescent and adults.
 - Add castings to potted plants, and compare plant growth and vibrancy to potted plants without castings...
- **HARVEST WORM CASTINGS:** Worm castings are called Black Gold for the garden. First harvest may take 3-6 months, but will be faster as time goes on.
- **MAKE WORM TEA:** Dilute the drained liquid from the bin with water and pour around the base of your plants. Loaded with nutrients, this tea can also repel pests!